

# GRAY BIRD

## A Little Plains Indian





## GRAY BIRD—A LITTLE PLAINS INDIAN

Gray Bird was a little Indian boy. He lived on the great plains. During the winter, the chief of his tribe picked out a sheltered spot at the edge of the forest for their home. When spring came they packed up and started for the hunting grounds.

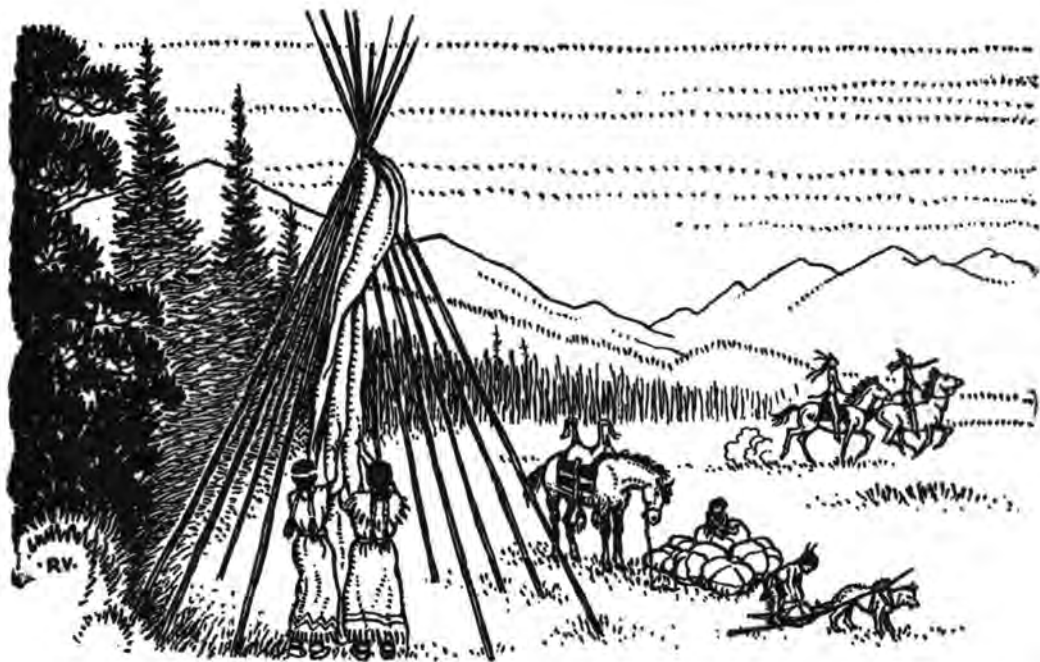
Gray Bird's father was named Big Wolf, because he was so strong and tall and brave. His mother was White Swan. He had an older brother, Running Deer, and a younger sister, Little Fawn. They all lived together in a tent with a pointed top. It was called a teepee.

When Big Wolf's chief decided that it was time to move,





Big Wolf and his family did not leave their home behind them as white men do when they move. Gray Bird's mother took the teepee down and rolled it up and tied it on a travois behind a horse.



Then wherever they stopped, she put it up and that was their home.

To make a travois White Swan tied two poles to a horse. She fastened one on each side, with the other end dragging on the ground behind the horse. Then she put the teepee and the bundles of clothing and food and dishes across the two poles and tied them on tight. When everything was ready, she climbed up on the horse's back and rode off with the ends of the travois dragging behind her. Nearly everything was carried in this way.

Big Wolf did not help White Swan take down or put up the teepee. He was a hunter and a warrior and was not expected to do any of the work around the camp. Little boys like Gray Bird helped their mothers. When they grew

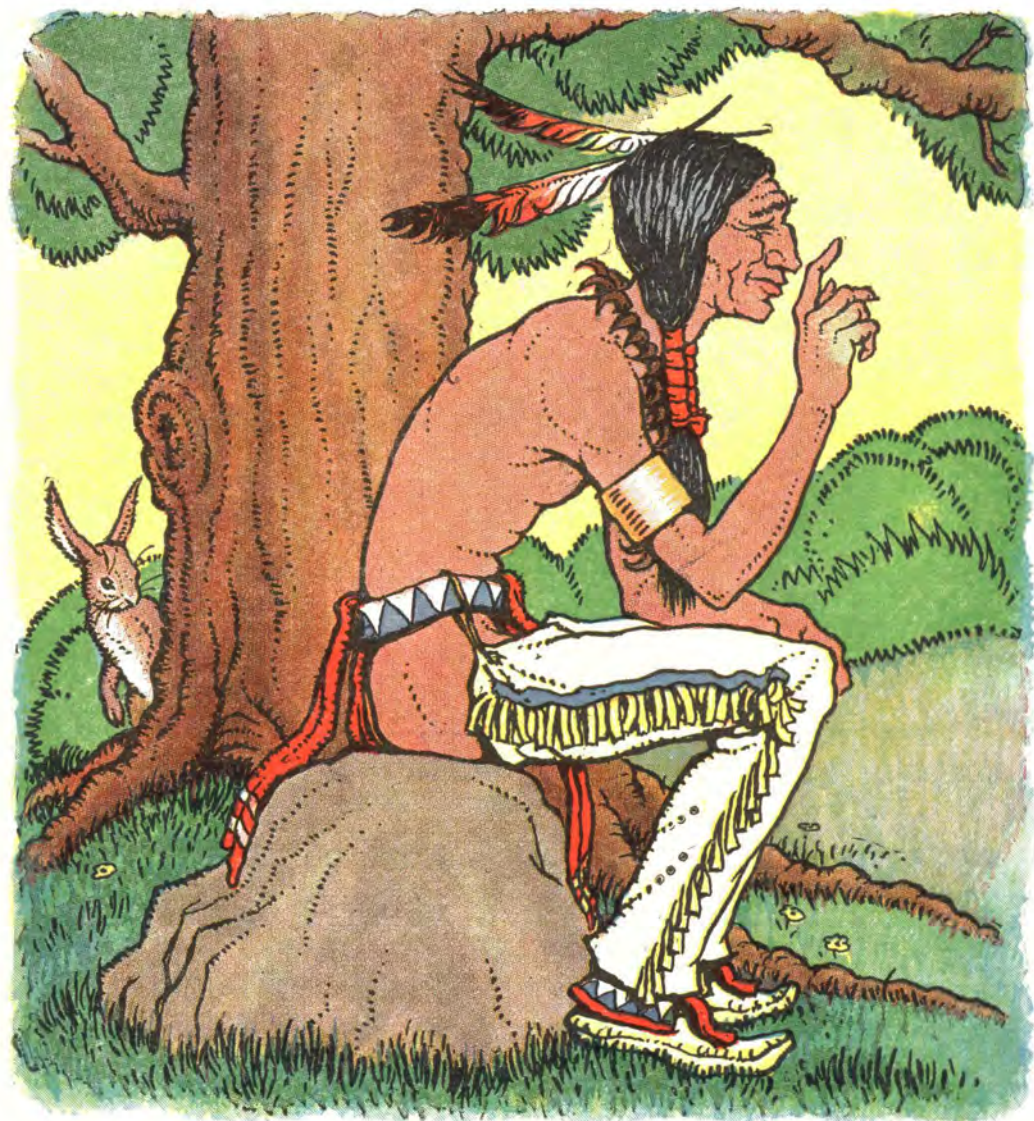


as big as Running Deer they rode with the men and no one thought of asking them to help do any of the women's work.

Sometimes White Swan took Little Fawn up on the horse with her. Sometimes, especially when Little Fawn was sleepy, she packed her in with the soft bundles on the travois. When Little Fawn was a tiny baby she traveled on her mother's back, in a papoose case. An Indian baby is called a papoose.

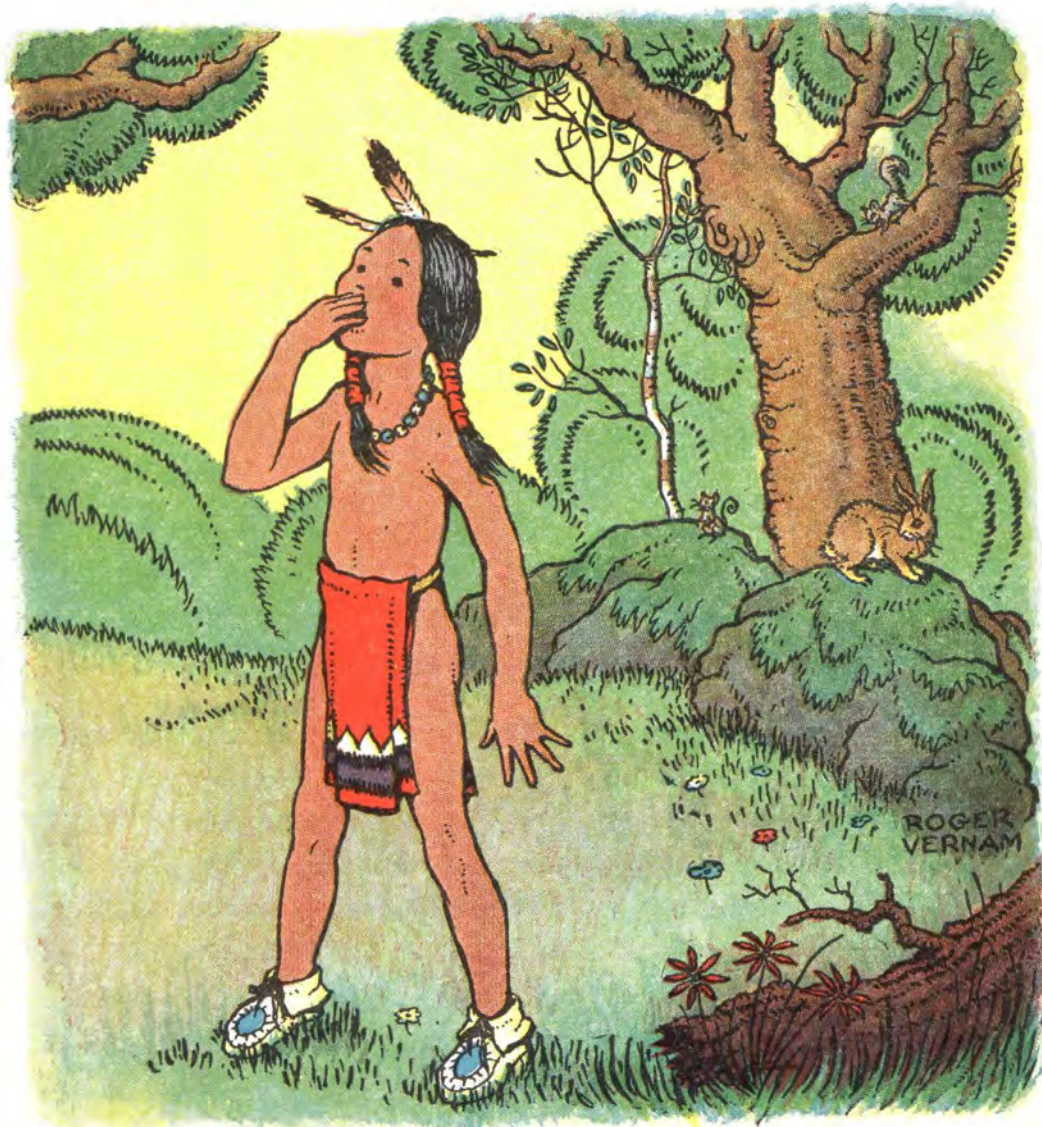
When Gray Bird was a papoose he was carried in a papoose case, too, but as soon as he could walk his mother let him run about with her while she worked. By the time he was six years old, he could beat many of the big boys of nine and ten at running.





Gray Bird's grandfather and grandmother taught him a great many interesting things. When he was only three, his grandfather began to teach him about the birds and animals of the forest. He also taught him to imitate the sounds





they made. He taught him to be quiet and patient and to step lightly and never to kill animals or birds needlessly. When he was five Gray Bird could move so silently through the forest trails, that he could come almost within arm's



reach of a squirrel, before little fuzzy tail ran chattering up a tree.

Once when he was running silently down a trail in the woods, he almost bumped into a bear cub. The little bear was quite as surprised as Gray Bird was. They stood and looked at each other for a moment. Gray Bird would have liked to make friends with the little bear, but his grandfather had told him never to do such a thing when alone.

"A little cub is harmless," Grandfather said, "but where there is a cub, there is a mother bear not far away. If you tried to make friends with the cub, the mother might think you were going to hurt her baby. So be sure to leave bear cubs alone, until you are older and have won the right to be a hunter."





Gray Bird remembered Grandfather's warning now. Instead of going toward the friendly looking little cub, he backed quietly away and hid behind some bushes at the side of the trail. He was glad he had obeyed, when he saw a great mother bear running clumsily down the trail toward the cub.

The old bear licked the head of the little one. Then she gave it a cuff and sent it off down the trail, away from Gray Bird. When they were out of sight, the boy stepped back onto the trail and ran home as fast as he could.

Gray Bird had a dog named Bushy. Sometimes he made a travois by fastening two strips of wood to Bushy as White Swan did by fastening the poles to a horse. Then he stretched a blanket between the strips and took a ride be-



hind his dog. Bushy didn't like to be used as a horse, and when he saw Gray Bird coming toward him with the harness, he would run into the woods or hide behind the teepee. The best time to catch him was when he was eating, so



when Gray Bird wanted to take a ride, he would ask his mother for a bone with a little meat on it. When Bushy had a bone to pick he was so interested in it he would not even notice Gray Bird, and before he knew it he would be harnessed up.

After his ride Gray Bird usually gave Bushy another bone, as a reward. Then Bushy was happy. He would gnaw and growl, and gnaw and growl. But Gray Bird did not mind the growling. He knew that was Bushy's way of showing his pleasure in the bone.





## GRAY BIRD

This little Indian loves his dog  
As all small children do.

They play together every day  
We know they're happy too.

"Jump for the bone" says "Gray Bird"  
It's just above your head.

The doggie looked and looked at it  
"Bow wow" is what he said.